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ABSTRACT

This five-part paper examines the role of teacher unions in Australian education at the state level. An overview describes the organizational strength of Australia's teacher unions. Part 1, "Teacher Union Growth," presents a history, and part 2, "Teacher Unions and State Education," interprets issues involving unions and government. Part 3, "The Rise of Teacher Trade Unionism 1966-1978," analyzes the reform movement and the rise of teacher militancy. Part 4, "The 1980s: Responding to the Crisis in State Education," discusses government, public, and union conflicts. Part 5, which makes up over two-thirds of the report, is called "Teacher Unionism and Education: The Victorian example," and provides an analysis of Victoria's unique union organization. This part begins by describing fragmentation and reform among Victoria's three major unions and goes on to interpret policy relations between unions and the Labor government between 1982 and 1985; Victorian unions reflect both democratic and oligarchic organizational tendencies. Union activity in policy formation, school organization, and the workplace, as well as in democratization of administrative and curricular decisionmaking are also described in this section. The paper concludes with a discussion of issues that influence unions' localized decisionmaking in the face of educational change. It is concluded that practical questions should be asked about school-based management to attain effective schooling. Thirty-nine references are appended. (CJH)

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THE EFFECT OF AUSTRALIAN TEACHERS UNIONS ON EDUCATION POLICY : THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVEL

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1. OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

The industrial organizations of teachers employed by Australia's state education departments are widely and popularly known as teacher's unions. These unions with a combined membership of 180,000 teachers are among the strongest teacher unions in the world, if measured by organizational unity and level of membership support. The pattern of a single organization representing all government school teachers, regardless of sex, function or location, in each state and the A.C.T., except for Victoria, is one admired, but not easily attained, elsewhere. This has ensured that Australia's teachers' unions are now the most visible of state white-collar unions. Furthermore the single organization of teachers has meant that the teachers' union is generally integrated into state educational policy making. In most states the teachers' union, not the elected representitives of teachers, are embodied in relevant statutes and departmental regulations.

TEACHER UNION GROWTH

The emergence of Australian teacher unionism between 1885 and 1895 was expressed in the formation of organizations in each colony which provide direct, continuous link with today's unions. The first, the Victorian State Schools Teachers' Union formed in 1886, was the forerunner of the Victorian Teachers' Union (established 1926). The oldest surviving union is the Queensland Teachers' Union (established 1889). The impetus for union formation came from several sources: teachers' response to the emergent state educational bureaucracy, reform of public service commissions, and the favourable climate for 'new unionism', which included the foundation of white collar unionism, especially in the public sector. (Spaull 1984).

A second formative stage of union development occurred between 1910 and 1925, when teachers' unions in most states came under the protective influence of state compulsory industrial arbitration. In return for access to arbitration machinery, teachers' unions - at this stage often fragmented or internally divided on sectional lines - were required to establish and maintain a single teachers' union. Thus the N.S.W. Teachers' Federation (established 1919) was an amalgam of some ten organizations. In this and subsequent periods, Labour governments and/or state industrial arbitration courts encouraged the growth of teacher

unions by legislative mandates (W.A. and Tasmania), industrial agreements and procedures (N.S.W., Queensland and S.A.) and by union preference clauses, including compulsory unionism in Queensland until 1967. As such, the distinctive organizational character of teachers' unions owes much to Australia's unique industrial arbitration system. (Spaull 1896(a)).

The contrast is apparent in Victoria, where the relative absence of any system of industrial regulation has produced a long, sordid history of teacher union fragmentation. The existence of a special wage board for teachers, the Teachers' Tribunal (1946-1982) has encouraged fragmentation by its approval of breakaway and rival groups. In 1981 there were seven teacher unions representing primary, secondary and technical teachers, principals and professional officers in education; although there has been increasing informal co-operation between the Victorian Teachers' Union, the Victorian Secondary Teachers' Association (established 1948) and the Technical Teachers' Union of Victoria (established 1967) in 1983, in response to a new system of industrial relations for teachers embodied in Victorian Teaching Servive Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, a system which encouraged a single bargaining agent, the Teachers' Federation of Victoria was formed as a 'peak' teacher union council of the three 'major' unions, i.e. the VTU, VSTA. and TTUV. (Hince and Spaull 1984).

A federal organization, acting as a loose confederation of state union constituents, has existed in various forms since 1921. In 1928 the Federated State School Teachers' Association of Australia became the federal organization, and was registered as a trade union of teachers with the Commonwealth Arbitration Court (until 1957), although it was denied access to its wagefixing process by a High Court in 1929 which ruled that teachers as state white collar employees were incapable of industrial disputes within its meaning in the Constitution. This ruling has been subject to reinterpretation in the 1980's, and state teachers, through the Australian Teachers' Union (established 1983) are currently seeking federal registration and awards. (See Spaull, 1985).

2. TEACHER UNIONS AND STATE EDUCATION

This paper will examine the role of teacher unions in Australian Education, especially at the state local level. Due to the time available for the preparation of this paper, and our intimate knowledge of teacher

unions in one state, the paper will tend to emphasize this state, Victoria. In doing so the point must be made at the outset, that there have been, and remain, significant differences in the configuration of teacher organizations in Victoria compared to the other states. Further the roles and influence of the three Victorian teacher unions in the period after 1982 stands as the most successful form of participation in an Australian state education system - this has resulted more from their use of interventionist strategies in the political process, rather than the innate superiority of separate, sectional teacher unionsim.

In order to give direction to this paper three points of interpretation require identification and elaboration at the outset:

(i) UNIONISM/PROFESSIONALISM

In this paper we adhere to an essentially 'Australian' position (recently supported from other analyses overseas, Ozga and Lawn 1981) that in the minds of teacher union leaders, and to some extent rank and file, and those who study closely teacher unionism, the objectives, policies and activities of state teacher unions cannot be crudely delineated between industrial (trade union) and professional (educational) categories. To represent the behavior of teacher unions in this form of traditional categorization is to create a misleading, indeed false, dichotomy in teacher unionism. One cannot separate the 'whites from the yolks' in a teachers' union, even though overseas critics and local observers have attempted to do this in their discussion of the strong industrial pre-occupation of Australian teachers' unions. As the historian of the largest union, the NSWTF., writes (Mitchell, 1975, 214):

> Their organizations have never seen among teachers 'interests clear categories which they could label "industrial", "scholastic", "professional", "social", or "political". This suggests that those who claim to be able to distinguish between the "professional" and "industrial" interests of teachers are seeing in the world of teachers' experiences something which excapes most teachers. It is also significant that the distinction between "professional" and "industrial" activities of teachers' organizations is usually made in conjuction with a value judgement against "industrial". Thus "professional" organizations are those which confine themselves to academic, scholastic and theoretical aspects of education, avoiding any topic which relates to financial or political matters, or bears on the welfare of teachers. By this definition it is "professional to

> discuss the educational role of the school library, but not to ask governments to build or stock libraries, it is "professional" to talk about educational aims, subject matter, curriculum construction, and teacher methods, but not to complain about crowded classrooms, poor equipment, libraries without books, ill-trained teachers, and low salaries.
>
> To elevate these distinctions to the level of dogma about professional and trade union behavior is as absurd as it is to deny that teachers' organizations are part of the wider framework of trade unionism. (See also Bessant and Spaull, 1972, pp. 92-96).

(ii) CENTRALIZATION OF EDUCATION AND TEACHER'S UNIONS

Australian teacher unions operating at the state level of education have derived a special power relationship because they deal with a highly centralized state bureaucracy. Their position is analagous to the French teachers unions position in a centralized national education system. In both countries the modern state apparatus has encouraged, even formalized, the position of state teachers' unions (this has been reinforced in most states by legal recognition in industrial law-see next section). This has meant that in centralized school systems - by definition, devoid of formal recognition of representative and community interests - the state teachers' unions emerged as the only primary interest group, and now the dominant interest group to challenge the unilateral decision making of the education bureaucracy. Duclaud-Williams' (1985) discussion of the FEN's power in French education is appropriate to the Australian teacher union experience. Centralization in education increases union power in the following ways: (i) as the union is relatively poorer than the Minister and Department, it is forced to concentrate its resources at one strategic level, at one point of political access, the directorate and minister. (ii) in a centralized system, where policy making is by nature politicized through legislation or ministerial order, decree and administrative regulation, teachers' unions do not have to defend themselves from the public charge that by challenging such decisions they "are introducing politics into education". (iii) in a centralized system there are strong political and technical needs to develop and maintain formal consultation and additional sources of information from relevant groups, which of course means teachers. The Minister needs to be seen to be consulting and winning consent might of course have benefitted other interests, but school principals, parents ect. have been slow to organize interest groups (pp. 89-91).

In Australia this has been accentuated at informal levels: first in the period before 1960 when many education department senior officers had been former activists in teacher unions; second in the current period where ministerial advisers have been recruited from teacher unions' officers and officials, especially in Labor Party government states.

(iii)COMPULSORY INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION

Several state teacher unions were the first teacher unions anywhere to gain full rights of access to a form of collective industrial negotiations through arbitration, conciliation and machinery which was independent of the Education Department. Thus teacher unions were able to negotiate not only salaries, but other employment conditions, and this was extended to cover conditions of work, e.g. class sizes by the 1960's, to a complete ambit of conditions in the current Victorian Teaching Service Act, 1983.

Why did the State, but not necessarily the Education Department, wish to bring teachers under the regulation of industrial arbitration? It did so, not with an avert desire to control union or professional activity (as occurred in the U.K. and Canada), but because it upheld the liberal view that government as a model employer should be party to arbitration, and that the "Australian Experiment" should have its widest, perhaps ultimate, application. This view had been encouraged by Labor Governments in the Commonwealth in 1911, supported by the Queensland Government in 1915 and 1916, followed by N.S.W. in 1919, and Western Australia and South Australia in the 1920's.

Access to industrial arbitration in Queensland and New South Wales (and elsewhere) strengthened the organizational power of teachers. This was apparent in the requirement to form a single central union, the immediate expansion of membership, the legal protection of the union and the improvement of teachers' salaries and conditions. These factors provided the unusual picture of strong teacher organization at the time, and in later years, when by 1935 a level of 80% unionization was found among Australian teachers, higher than overseas counterparts.

> Whether in the longview compulsory arbitration helped to engender more conservative and more compliant teacher unionism in Australia is problematic ... What is clear is that the state's intervention, through its industrial

> relations system, acted as a positive force on the formation and growth of teachers' unions in the twentieth century. This was an important and progressive modification to the centralized control of state education (Spaull, 1986, p. 26).

The impact of those teacher unions with full industrial bargaining powers on education departments, was acknowledged as early as the Directors General Conference in 1932 (Minutes p. 86). The N.S.W. Education Department reported that with the advent of collective bargaining for teachers it was necessary for sound relations to be maintained with the NSWTF" 'in these days the term unions is not regarded with suspicion or misgivings. In fact it is now quite a respected term.' It was concerned however that city branches had become too heavily orientated towards industrial and union issues, but in country areas the professional side of their work was emphasized more than labour conditions. It concluded that there was a need for more unselfish devotion to the ostensible work of education organizations. 'Many of the teachers who reach the senior level of management are not the best representatives of the profession; just what the Head Office of Administration can do to attract better types of teachers to union leadership was difficult to say.'

3. THE RISE OF TEACHER TRADE UNIONISM 1966-1978

This period has two different images in the history of Australian schooling. It is seen by many as the last, long period of an education reform movement, the age of 'aquarius' of new hopes and a new vitality in state schooling which captured the public imagination (and public critics) in a movement based on "review", "revivial" and "reform" of schooling. Such was the frenzy in activity, the size and flow of funds for education, Bessant and Spaull could write in 1976: "teacher unionism has assisted the transformation of educational politics to a process of politicization, "whereby pressure group activity ... emerges as a regular determinant in political and bureaucratic decision making for school systems" (p. 183).

The second image is one of the rise of teacher militancy in Australia. This was the period which saw the emergence of the modern face of Australian teacher unionism: large, expanding, boisterous, and successful. The popular perception was of the new union militant: long hair, denim jeans, open-collared shirt, placard-carrying, badge-wearing unionist marching in the heavy boots of old-style trade unionism.

The two images were not unrelated. Education reform did not just happen. Militant teacher unionism did not occur in a vacuum but stemmed from changes in outlook which teachers, many of whom started teaching in the early 1960s, cared about the material and qualitative conditions of state schools. In politics the movement was epitomized by teachers and teacher unions becoming leading interests in state politics and state elections - without committing the unions to a party line. In this teacher unions responded to, and stimulated, the electoral awareness in education, the size of state budget devoted to education, education reporting in the media, and the importance of an elaborate education policy in party platform. This involvement and visibility of teacher unionism in state politics found a federal arena in the early 1970s, and a champion in E.G. Whitlam and the Labor Party which came to office in December 1972.

In the industrial field and the large overlap between industrial and political activity which characterizes modern teacher unionism, teacher unionism was characterized by teacher militancy, misleadingly called the "teachers strike".

In 1974 the Commonwealth Department of Industrial Relations included teaching for the first time in its occasional surveys of industrial relations. It found:

> Teaching is becoming less formal and disciplinarian, in most cases giving more freedom and responsibility to the teacher. The changes in teacher training, introduction of new methods, increasing community participation, has led to teachers seeing themselves as professionals, more than employees. As a result of this growth towards being a professional body, teachers have demanded greater involvement in education management.
>
> This expresses itself in disputes over class sizes, numbers of hours to be worked and similar causes. Although unions describe this sort of claim in terms of "professionalism", the issues are basically improved working conditions, and although stated as being in the interests of education, they do appear to have an element of self interest as well.
>
> On the other hand, State Governments have been slow in making concessions in this area, and this had led to considerable industrial action in recent years in some States.
>
> The problems seem to be far more obvious in the large States - New South Wales and Victoria. In the other States, good working relationships have been developed between State Governments and teacher organizations and some attempt has been made to provide

machinery for the solving of industrial disputes. Although unions in these states are still quite vocal in stating their demands, little industrial action has occurred.

The report predicted that teacher militancy would continue over sophisticated issues relating to teachers employment conditions or teachers' demanding greater involvement in their schools and education systems.

Predictions were confimred by the growth of teacher unrest in the late 1970s.

Teachers complained incessantly about working conditions, even in the "Whitlam" years of financial flourish. One national survey (1975) found that teachers were dissatisfied, above all other problems, with size of classes, impoverished conditions of buildings and facilities and the dearth of resource personnel. (Campbell, 1975: 44).

Countering this union movement was increasing official opposition to teacher unionism expressed by state governments who removed the benefit of automatic deductions of annual subscriptions in the case of two Victorian (1971-73) teachers' unions, NSW (as well as attempts to "deregister" the NSWFT in 1974) and Queensland 91976) following prolonged industrial disputes by teachers unions. (The NT government was to remove the same benefit in 1984). Public reaction to teacher unionism accrued in the daily press editorials, the sensationalizing of disputes on the newspapers and TV current affairs programmes ("confrontation", "teacher turbulence", etc.), the re-emergence of teacher union teacher "bashing" in the Bulletin, and Quadrant, the manufacturing of an educational crisis by these journals, and the Australian newspaper around 1975. Conservatives in the education community attacked what was seen as a loss of dedication and commitment among teachers, who were now primarily 'economic animals', militant in disposition and void of sympathy for their students or parents. Some attributed this decline of state teachers to an increased unionization, militancy, feminization, youth, inexperience of teachers. Much of this criticism was unfounded, and was not borne out by surveys of public attitudes to teaching.

The growth of teacher unionism was an uneven but steady growth, the uneveness being a reflection of the impact of official sanctions against several militant unions and inter-union disputes and continuing

fragmentation in Victoria. In 1967 there were some 87,000 teachers who belonged to state teachers unions (or 86 per cent of eligible members); in 1973 there were 92,935 (89 per cent) teachers and in 1978, 132,576 (86 per cent).

To this overall growth was a change in total configuration of the organizations. The TTUV was formed in 1967 as a large breakaway of technical teachers from the VTU. Victoria also spawned trade unions of principals and education officers in the 1970s (see later) and finally, the Victorian Association of Teachers at the end of the period - this was a new type of teacher union - a "political dissenter" (as distinct from an economic union, a professional interest organization or even a "ginger group") within the political factionalism of existing teachers unions. Two new teachers unions, the ACCFT and NTTF, were formed in the early 1970s as a teacher response to the creation of a new teaching service for the Commonwealth territories. Previously teachers working in the ACT or NT had been eligible to join the NSWTF or SAIT respectively.

The ACTTF was formed in 1972 out of the existing membership of the NSWTF's ACT and Secondary Teachers associations. It developed a structure which respected the historical pattern of sectional branches in the NSWTF but acknowledged the new trend in work based teacher unionism, as well as the decentralized control of decision-making unionism, as well as the decentralized control of decision-making in the newly created Independent Education Authority of ACT. Thus branch autonomy based on the school as the basic union of government similar to that found the VSTA and TTUV became the mode of operation of the ACCFT. This was different to its parent union, the NSWTF. The ACTTF became an immediate effective voice in the development of ACT education in the early 1970s. Its own success in recruiting "old" NSWTF members and new members to give it a membership to 1,567 after a year's formation and over 2,740 members by 1976, ensured its voice would be heard. But it was also helped by the popularity of teacher participation in decision-making within the education reform movement in Canberra during these years.

The overall growth in teacher unionism in this period brought with it a series of modifications to the established characteristics of teacher unionism. Some of these were a function of the increase to the size of resources and nature of individual unions; others were responses to new political perceptions which began to influence white collar unionists

and/or women unionists in the 1970s, while others were related to the changing perceptions of teachers about the role of their teacher unions in school reform and improvement in teachers participation in school and educational decisiions. These changes included:

1. the expansion of membership services with major changes in the range of institutional benefits and other services, e.g. Health Benefits, Credit Societies. This was accompanied by the recruitment or election of specialist officers to deal with areas once the domain of the general secretary and assistant general secretary. Thus research officers positions became specialized in areas such as salaries and industrial conditions, on educational policy and research.

2. Modification to the centralized nature of teacher union government. Centralist control as defined by Bessant and Spaull, (1972, p. 7) had severely constrained independent action at the sectional and local school level. Although this control was considered effective for external political relations it had caused serious antagonisms within the unions, the most dramatic were the breakaways from the Victorian Teachers' Union of the two post-primary teachers' unions in the VSTA and TTUV.

Victoria also saw the industrial emergence of various principals and professional officers associations in this period. They had started as professional, fellowship groups as early as the 1940s in the case of secondary principals (VHSPA, established 1948), but as a result of increasing teacher militancy they had been officially encouraged to act independently of the teachers' unions. The VSTA and VHSPA broke off a strained relationship in 1974. In 1970 a Primary Principals Association was formed from principals in the VTU and it was approved by the Teachers' Tribunal in 1976. In 1977 this association formed into a teachers' union with formal structure of sub-branches, elected delegates to monthly councils and the annual conference. In 1975 the various sectional associations like VHSPA and PPA began regular meetings with other 'similar' organizations to discuss educational matters including industrial relations issues with inspector's association and professional officers - this became known as the "five organizations".

In June 1977 a group of secondary school principals in the QTU set in motion a secret inquiry to see whether principals could become a separate registered union in the Industrial Commission following the internal

dispute over QTU's rolling strikes in support of their dismissed "Marijuana four" teachers. Nothing developed after the QTU defeated militant activists attempts to control the Executive. In NSW, a small group of principals calling themselves in NSW Principals Association was formed and took a public stance in 1978. It appealed to Parents and Citizens associations to reject NSWTF arguments that inspection of teachers should be modified, and management of schools become a collective staff activity rather than the prerogative of the principal (Education, 27 September, 1978).

3. There also emerged a process of rethinking on the structure of teacher union government. It was stimulated by the desire to involve the rank and file in more decision-making within various unions. It has been accompanied by concern that the organizations had become too large and unwieldy. Furthermore the moves towards administrative devolution or even attempts at political decentralization in some education departments helped fashion this re-examination.

4. Coincidental to this type of reorganization was the abolition of sectional branches in several unions. The VTU and NSWTF carried out major branch innovations in their metropolitan areas. This ensured that primary and post-primary teachers, and men and women teachers, will meet and act together, thus removing much of the friction which beset these unions for fifty or more years.

5. A fifth new trend in teacher unionism was the gradual drift towards continuing interest in educational problems. By the end of the 1960s union orientation had moved towards encompassing interests in the professional status of teachers, including teacher qualifications, inspection, and teachers' further education (Bessant and Spaull, 1972, p. 95). By the mid-1970s there were indications that teachers' unions are attempting to redress the imbalance in interests by the implementation of policies in the educational domain (Bessant and Spaull, 1976, p. 184). The most significant developments were the teachers' union roles in secondary school reform, including curriculum modification and examinations, spelling and literacy reform, successful opposition to the basic compaign sexism in education and reform in inner city schooling. Much of this interest was generated fromm the new curricular freedom for teachers and the decentralization of schooling decisions, which the TTUV, VSTA, ACTTF and SAIT had demanded. This move towards defined educational

interests in teachers' unions was not accompanied by a corresponding decline in the industrial disposition of teachers unions; rather the shift will be towards a more balanced set of industrial, professional, and educational objectives and programmes.

6. Another new development in teachers' unionism in this period was the revival of its interest in the wider trade union movement. It was a revival in so far that, during the 1940s there was a general change in teachers' perception of the importance of the labour movement. It was more than a wartime flirtation, but in the end only the NSWTF affiliated with the NSW Labour Council (1941) and the ACTU (1943). The other teachers' unions had remained outside this sphere of influence, although most had joined the Australian Council of Salaried and Professional Associations (ACSPA). The question of trade union affiliation was raised again in the 1970s but only the TTAV and VSTA actually affiliated with the Trades Hall Council. In 1976 the QTU voted 78 to 62 against affiliation. Meanwhile the ATF began examining the possibility of some form of ACTU affiliation in 1977. The reasons for this renewed interest in trade union involvement were complex. It appeared to be a manifestation of the emergent teacher militancy and this partly explains its development in Victoria. It was also part of the realization that many teachers now see their organizations as both professional bodies and trade unions (England, 1972). It is also part recognition of the status of NSWTF and the fact that its trade union affiliation had not been detrimental to teachers. The existence of trade union support has helped the NSWTF in its equal pay for women teachers campaign in its fight with the Public Service Board 1972-74 and the State government over industrial deregistration and union preference, and the staffing problems in the Warilla High School strike in 1976 (West, 1976). Finally, the revival of interest in the trade union movement was stimulated by the changing nature of trade unionism in Australia and especially the modernization of the ACTU under R.J. Hawke, and improved relations between ACTU and ACSPA.

In the growth of teacher unionism in Australia in this period, there was widespread evidence of organizational bureacratization, and other signs of organizational maturity as teachers unions at least acknowledged new undercurrents, and tensions from their membership. At the same time there were obvious electoral pressures located e.g. regionalization changes in the education system, but more fundamentally in the economic system (and industrial relations) that were forced on the teachers unions. But they moved very slowly, perhaps like others not realizing the

import of these changes around them. Union leadership did not appear perceptive, perhaps because 'looking inwards' goes with the job of elected officers and officials.

In the larger organizations where their research and networks suggested the problems, their response was measured because different and dispersed interests had to be accommodated. In the smaller unions such as the new ACTTF their comparative inexperience was a factor; in unions like the VSTA and TTUV, although they were responsive and prepared to act, and did take political and industrial action, they did not have the massive support, nor the basic support where nearly as many of their teachers were outside rather than in the union. Yet it was only the VSTA in this period and the TTUV at the end of the period which were prepared to challenge the basic assumption that education departments, officers and principals, controlled the schools. Both unions were educationally progressive, as well as politically alert and industrially militant: they had been the frontrunners, but not necessarily with the greatest effect, because of their smaller size. Their influence was important, however, providing precedent and example, to the VTU. Its awakening would be felt in Victorian education in the 1980s.

4. THE 1980s: RESPONDING TO THE CRISIS IN STATE EDUCATION

The above trends were overtaken in the mid-1970s by a state of crisis in funding which saw the adoption and implementation of 'monetarist' economic policies aimed at reducing high inflation rates by drastic cut backs in government expenditure at both federal and state levels (Bates, 1984). At the same time, wage indexation (and later, the wages freeze) held down teachers' salaries, which now under the Incomes and Prices Accord are difficult to restore (Spaull and Hince, in press). The ensuing adjustment by education departments meant that a wide range of school and teacher service programmes were reduced. These reductions came at a crucial time for they coincided with a broadening in the social demands on, and expectations of, schooling and signficant changes in the occupational structure and role of teaching.

The real and effective attempts that had been made in the late 1960s and early 1970s to improve the quality of schooling and which had helped to lift teachers' morale were placed under threat in the late 1970s by the slowing of economic growth (Burke, 1985). Teacher expectations about the

quality of their work and careers diminished and were replaced by the spectres of teacher unemployment, non-tenurable employment contracts, career immobility increasing demands on teachers' time and a more complex and accountable range of tasks and duties (Spaull, 1986b).

Other factors that have added to teachers' disillusionment over recent years have included a marked decline in public confidence and political support for state schooling, the rise of conservative education movements and the re-emergence of the social and educational divisiveness of the state-aid debate. Reinforcing these factors in a number of government school systems have been declining enrolments which have been used as an argument for justifying reductions in expenditures.

The 'crisis' in state/crisis in state education' that became evident in the late 1970s has also led to structural changes in the control and administration of state education systems. Corporate planning and management design, program budgeting and increased centralization of the public authority in state schooling through the ministry have accompanied both genuine and cosmetic reforms at the school level (Spaull and Hince, in press). Administrative devolution to regions and schools, new advisory bodies at state levels and the partial decentralization of school curriculum and governance have all served to change the basis of educational authority. One important consequence has been that teacher and community confusion over the pace and direction of educational change have given the office of Minister for Education greater influence on the school system than at probably anytime in the long history of state education departments. At a very practical level, it has been the teacher in the classroom and the principal in the school who have had to bear the brunt of the rapid, but incohesive, structural reform of state education departments (Chapman, 1986).

Finally, but by no means of least importance, the occupational role of teachers has undergone significant changes in the past decade. These changes, discussed by Connell (1984), White (1985), Spaull and Mann (1985) and others, have produced an increasingly complex work situation and experience for classroom teachers arising from the expansion of the modern labour process in the teaching service. The trends have not occurred evenly in the work of teachers, and they are not without apparent contradictions. There has been an increase in the level of skills required by some groups of teachers and deskilling amongst others where

their work has been replaced or supplemented by specialist teachers and equipment. As Spaull and Mann (1985) suggest:

> The trend towards specialization has burgeoned recently in 'career guidance' teachers, transition to work education officers - reflecting public concern for the schools' function in time of economic crises - subject and general curriculum consultants, pupil welfare coordinators, teacher librarians, and educational personnel in multi-cultural education, non-sexist education and Aboriginal education who are in the para-teaching positions which have flourished over the last decade in Victorian schools and the education department. Their growth has resulted in a narrowing of certain aspects of the teachers' task and an overall deskilling (p. 19).

The educational, structural and work-related changes that have emerged since the late 1970s are reflected in teacher union policies and behaviour. There are now many more defensive union policies aimed at protecting the individual member or groups of teachers within the teaching service. State education is moving through a period of political turbulence and teachers are increasingly anxious to secure their working situation. Union policies reflect the instability of teaching as an occupation and the uncertainty of employment and career advancement prospects in teachers - features which have appeared for the first time in Australia's modern educational history.

The past few years have seen teachers' unions demonstrate increased concern for the political survival of the state school system. Previously, government schools were attacked by teachers for their inadequate resources. Today they are attacked by others outside the system for their inadequacies in dealing with modern social questions and educational problems. Teacher unions have responded by emphasizing the importance of the state education system in terms of maintaining social harmony and its importance in dealing with disadvantaged social groups whether they be the working class, women and girls, or members of rural communities. Similarly they have expressed concern for the state of the economy and its regulation, emphasizing the need for greater, rather than less government control.

Another major shift in teacher union interest has been the elaboration of specific policies on school curriculum. Teacher unions always have expressed a general interest in curriculum, particularly in the way curriculum is determined within a centralised education

department, but recently they have moved into specific and detailed areas of curriculum development. This has occurred in two ways: by opposition to the more conservative forms of a core curriculum and support for the extension of particular forms of social education including civics, political education, peace studies and environmental education. Traditionally, these areas have not been seen as the teachers' prerogative except in New South Wales where the Teachers' Federation has had a long-standing policy on civic and social education.

In the wider domain, teachers' unions have extended their policies to become the forefront of community groups involved in the 'new politics' in areas such as the repeal of laws against homosexuality, criticism of the tobacco industry, and advocacy of nuclear disarmament. In the past, only the NSWTF or local branches of other state unions would be prepared to advocate such policies in public arenas. Of course, the risk with these policy areas is that the teachers' unions are exposed to internal and external criticism that they have extended their interests beyond the traditional boundaries of union interests. Today such criticisms are not as trenchant.

5 TEACHER UNIONISM AND EDUCATION: THE VICTORIAN EXAMPLE

(i) The State Level

Victorian teacher unionism is different in organisation and political style from any other form in Australia. It departs from the typical Australian model of a single, central teachers' union. The Victorian experience has been an organizational malaise based on intense sectional antagonism, fragmentation, and at times inter-union rivalry. This has been partly offset by a level of innovative and progressive policies and practice in the major unions which has recently placed Victoria in the forefront of teacher unionism in Australia. Two examples illustrate the point and are sufficient in this overview: the abolition in the 1970s of classroom inspection of teachers' performance for promotion and the obtaining of family leave provisions for teachers of up to seven years in 1984. The cost of organizational fragmentation has been high, however: the duplication of resources, lower rates of union membership than interstate, political exploitation of union separateness and the emergence of conservative splinter groups.

The government of Victoria's three major teacher unions varies in detail, but all have a common pattern. Rank and file members belong to the organization at the school (or group of schools) level and delegate responsibility for decision making to an annual conference, and administration and policy implementation to a monthly council meeting of about 40 teachers and an executive of about 10, the senior executives being full-time. The VSTA and TTUV, as dissenters from the old centralised structures of the VTU, constructed the school as the basic organizational unit.

The VTU underwent signficant changes in its basic structures in the mid-1970s. It abolished sectional branches for men and women in the Melbourne metropolitan area, it yielded its right to recruit post-primary teachers (although it added other sections to its membership such as school interpreters), and it devolved some authority for local action to regions, branches and sub-branches, the last being the school. In accord with general moves towards a decentralization of Victorian education, all three unions have established groupings and regions of branches in order to make their organisations more responsive to local issues and as a means of electing members to their governing councils.

The TTUV has special organizational problems due to the diversity of its membership. Branches in secondary technical schools accommodate both trade and academic subject teachers, groups that tend to differ in their training and employment backgrounds and, some have argued, in their educational and industrial outlooks. There are also branches for TAFE teachers who, unlike technical school teachers, are not employed by the Education Department. The TTUV has attempted to cater for this diversity - a diversity, incidentally, that is found in many other trade unions - by ensuring since 1980 that TAFE has a separate autonomous organisation within the TTUV umbrella. In effect there are two unions within the one organisation.

The school branch as the basic unit of membership organisation is not unique to the VSTA and the TTUV. It is also found in the Australian Capital Territory Teachers' Federation (ACTTF), the Northern Territory Teachers' Federation (NTTF) and more recently, in the South Australian Institute of Teachers (SAIT). However, compared to the Victorian situation these other three unions tend to be smaller and to have a branch membership that is less geographically dispersed.

In attempting to explain the changing nature of active branch membership in the VSTA, Noyce (1982a) has suggested that, unlike the early to mid-1970s, industrial issues in the early 1980s tended to focus on the concerns of particular sub-groups of teachers such as emergency teachers and those in 'excess'. The lack of issues concerned with the standing and conditions of the whole teaching service has made it more difficult to generate interest amongst the more experienced members.

Concerns with membership apathy go beyond activities at the branch level. In all three major Victorian unions, state-level policy committees are not always filled, while public meeting forums, and even annual conferences, are not fully patronised. Election turnouts for teacher representatives on statutory bodies are similarly unimpressive. Of course, membership apathy is not a problem unique to teachers' unions; it is found amongst other white collar and industrial unions.

There are also organizational characteristics which may serve to either reinforce or reduce the level of apathy. Communications systems are of particular importance in large organisations and teacher unions must keep close contact with members dispersed all over the state. In recent years the Victorian teacher unions have recognised this by changing the format of their publications and communication channels. Victoria has been served by outstanding teacher union jounalism. In the 1960s VSTA's Secondary Teacher under editor Bill Hannan became one of the best teachers' journals in the world. Many of Hannan's ideas and invited contributions helped shape the intellectual climate for reform in secondary schools. In 1981 the TTUV and VSTA ran joint issues which led to the publication of the local Victorian Teacher (1982) and the Australian Teacher (1983), which is now a national education journal.

Despite the use of militant tactics by the three major Victorian teacher unions in the late 1970s and early 1980s, it can be argued that in this period they tended to act as dependent institutions in the sense defined by Martin (1975) as:

> ... those reflected in their tendency to react to events rather than shape them ... (such unions) are mostly ... engaged in essentially defensive or protective operations stimulated by changing circumstances outside their control ... (Martin, 1975:134).

Teacher unions normally behave in this way when fulfilling their basic objective of fulfilling membership interests, whether it be by resolving individual and group grievances with the Education Department, or responding to variations in existing provisions. However, at a broader policy level the unions exercised a more proactive role in the later 1960s and early 1970s by stimulating significant improvements in teaching conditions and school resources. By contrast, in the more recent period the teacher unions were forced into a more defensive role largely because of government budgetary constraints and a political environment less supportive of education. In Victoria this reactive stance was particularly evident during the final two or three years of the State Liberal government.

The changed political and economic environment of the late 1960s and early 1970s created uncertainty within the teacher unions about strategies and tactics. Should teachers accept the changed circumstances and hedge against further attacks, or should they should take the offensive and confront government and public opinion head on with industrial and political campaigns?

Underlying these considerations was the issue of whether, and how, the three major unions should combine for a more influential role in educational policy making. There were areas in which combined union action was successful in reversing potentially threatening policy initiatives. A good example is provided by the attempt in 1979 to introduce limited-tenure contracts for beginning teachers. The unions sought to embarrass the government about the department's lack of positive policies, not only for those teachers concerned, but for secondary and tertiary students who faced unemployment. The appeal was directed to middle-class and country electorates and their MPs, as well as the general public. The lobbying, public meetings and rallies in Melbourne and the country were reinforced with a number of regional and state-wide stoppages. Significantly, in November 1979 this issue prompted the first joint strike by the VTU, VSTA and TTUV. Union research conducted at the time indicated that there was considerable public support for the unions' view that there are ways of managing a prospective teacher surplus other than by limited-term employment or retrenchmets, and positive ministerial negotiations eventuated.

Other combined actions of the three unions were less successful, perhaps because the unions' efforts were not sufficiently well targetted. For example, on questions such as alleged falling standards in schools and moves to centralize curriculum development, the unions directed their efforts towards convincing the sympathetic, not the protagonists, of the dangers of the pedagogical backlash. The combined unions conference on 'Who owns the curriculum?' in August 1980 illustrates the point. It rallied the converted, but its effect on policy was minimal; indeed, five months later the government expanded compulsory physical education in primary schools without consulting the teachers (or even the Education Department for that matter!).

The general trend of teacher unions being forced to adopt defensive positions during the later 1970s has to be modified by examples of individual unions being able to maintain or create policy initiatives. In secondary education the VSTA successfully aided the curriculum reformers' campaign for abolition of external and university entrance examinations at Year 12. The union's public activities, and its use of the Secondary Teacher to maintain an informed secondary teachers' group, ensured that when the Victorian Institute of Secondary Education (VISE) Council was established in 1977 to administer Higher School Certificate (HSc), 12 of its Council of 24 members would be persons 'with substantial experience in secondary education', a concession which the government made to reduce the likelihood of trouble with the VSTA. Since the establishment of VISE, the VSTA has continued to agitate for reforms to VISE itself and to the HSC examinations. Examples of its actions include arguments that secondary teachers (specifically government school teachers) were still under-represented on the VISE Council (VSTA News 2/80), criticism of the standardisation of scores across subjects (Secondary Teacher, March 1980), and encouragement of VISE to accredit the Schools Tertiary Entrance Certificate (STC) as a wholly school-based Year 12 assessment.

During the early 1980s the VTU was active in formulating Family Leave and Permanent Part-time Employment policies to give teachers, especially women, more flexibility in teaching arrangements. Little progress was made on the Part-time Work policy, but the Family Leave Policy, which provides for seven years extended leave for men and women and the right to return to a permanent position, was finally implemented by the Education Department in November 1984. Since the mid-1970s the VTU has sought a reorganization of the primary teacher promotion system in the light of

declining school enrolments (promotion opportunities being tied to size of schools). After lengthy negotiations with the Education Department, the VTU won an agreement for a major increase in the number of promotion positions in primary schools. Another area of special interest in the VTU has been the rural or one-teacher school. It established at Bendigo a rural schools committee which has examined ways of improving conditions for rural school teachers and teaching-aides, overcoming the cultural and isolation problems of small schools, and investigating the feasibility of clustering or multi-campus arrangements.

Industrial Relations Machinery

A major achievement for the teacher unions has been the long-overdue reform of Victoria's industrial relations machinery. Since the early 1960s there had been almost constant agitation for reform of the Teachers' Tribunal. The unions argued that there were three major deficiencies in the Tribunal's powers and procedures. First, the Tribunal did not normally insist that the employer, namely the Education Department, make a case rebutting or modifying union submissions. Accordingly, in a number of instances the unions were left unclear of the basis on which Tribunal decisions had been reached. Second, the government rarely instructed the government representative on the Tribunal on the stance it wanted adopted, or, on the occasions when it did, these instructions were frequently ignored. As such, it was difficult to discern the government's real position on matters of dispute. Finally, the Tribunal had no powers to resolve disputes at a local level.

These deficiencies, in addition to the Education Department's increasing unwillingness to negotiate work conditions, brought the primitive industrial relations system into further disrepute, a situation which not only the teachers' unions recognised, but which was achnowledged by official investigations, such as the Southwell inquiry into the Teaching Service (1971) and the Bland inquiry into the Victorian Public Service (1975). In 1977 the three unions jointly called for the introduction of direct negotiations and a radical change in the Tribunal's functions so that it could be a tribunal of conciliation and voluntary artibration. At the 1979 elections, the Liberal state government promised reform of the system and this policy was put into effect with the accession of a new Minister for Education.

In mid-1979 the Minister convened a seminar of senior departmental administrators which agreed on the principle of direct negotiations with teachers, except on salaries, with a reconstituted tribunal having powers to settle industrial disputes and arbitrate on salaries. The Minister favoured the introduction of a direct negotiations system, except that compulsory arbitration, not voluntary arbitration, should be available, and that all salary matters should be determined by an arbitral process. In November 1979 he incorporated these arguments into a new proposal - a Victorian Teaching Service Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. This proposal was rejected by the three teachers' unions who were concerned about the transfer of tribunal powers to the Education Department and the lack of teacher representation on the proposed commission. Instead they called for, and gained, a seminar on industrial relations in the Education Department which led to the establishment of a Working Party of principal parties in the government education system, which presented its report (known as the Hince Report) in May 1981. The major recommendations of the report (which were to become the elements of the new industrial relations system) were:

* the Education Department (through the Minister) should be the employer;
* the Department and teacher unions should negotiate all claims, including salaries;
* a Teaching Service Conciliation and Arbitration Commission should be established, consisting of a president and other commissioners and consultation with the unions should occur prior to appointments being made;
* where no agreement was reached the parties would proceed to conciliation;
* if no agreement was reached by negotiation and conciliation, the dispute would be referred to arbitration, if both parties agreed; and
* a grievance procedure would be established to assist the resolution of disputes arising from alleged breaches of agreements or determinations.

The proposed system of industrial relations had significant advantages over the old arrangements. If forced the Education Department to become directly accountable as an employer in its dealings with the teacher unions, it provided procedures for salary determinations, and it established machinery to settle grievances and disputes. Of course, like

any industrial relations system it could not of itself remove basic sources of conflict or even prevent stoppages, but it was anticipated that it would change (for the better) the character and incidence of disputes in the government school system (Hince and Spaull, 1984).

In the event, the Working Party recommendations were not implemented by the State Liberal Government. Under political pressure from the Cabinet, which was concerned about perceptions of 'going soft' on teachers, in November 1981 the Minister rushed through Parliament the Education Service Act. This legislation was somewhat scrambled and ambiguous in its elements. It incorporated some sections of the Working Party's report, including the establishment of a Teaching Service Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, but it severely limited the role which direct negotiations could play in determining working conditions. The then Labor Opposition pledged that if elected it would amend the legislation to honour the original intentions of the Working Part Report. Labor gained office in 1982 and a year later introduced the Teaching Service Act, 1983.

Electoral Intervention in 1982 and 1985

The late 1970s and early 1980s were a period of great frustration for Victoria's teacher unions. In the defensive atmosphere of those times, conventional union strategies tended to either fail or produce inconclusive results. The unions had developed progressive policies in response to the looming insecurity in the teaching service and structural changes in the education system; what was required was a radical step to give effect to such policies. An active role in the electoral process came to be seen as the only alternative. The move was not without precedent in Victoria. In 1945 the VTU successfully campaigned for the defeat of a conservative government in order to implement the Teachers' Tribunal. On a smaller scale and with much less success, the TTUV, and to a lesser extent the VSTA, had campaigned against State Liberal Governments during the 1970s. However, intervention in the 1982 Victorian election was significantly different from these earlier campaigns in terms of the strength of direct support provided to the ALP.

In late 1981 and early 1982 the VTU, the least militant but perhaps the most pragmatic of the three major teacher unions, moved to support the ALP in the 1982 elections. The VSTA and TTUV soon followed suit. The

move by the VTU was particularly significant. Spaull and Mann (1985) have examined this decision in detail, emphasizing the importance of the VTU's $1000,000 donation to the ALP campaign and its widespread organizational support for ALP candidates. They write:

> The issues promoted by the ALP candidates at the VTU's request were the performance and broken promises of the conservative government; size of classes, buildings, tenure staff levels. Reform of the industrial relations system was not given prominence locally because of its technical complexity, and because of its obvious relationship to the sensitive area of the teacher strikes. Overall, the level and type of VTU support for the ALP was the most systematic, organized attempt in state politics to bring an educational reform campaign before the electorate. It would also rank as one of the best examples of a sustained intervention by any interest group in Victorian politics. It succeeded in reviving public education as a major election issue - 'education' having become a tried, dispirited issue in the previous three elections. It was helped by conservative critics who accused the teachers' unions of 'buying government' to gain such 'emotive' benefits as compulsory unionism, union domination of Labor administrations, 'sweetheart' salaries deals, etc. (Spaull and Mann, 1985, p. 33).

The effects of the teachers' campaign on the election result are difficult to assess. While not as substantial as the euphoria on election night might have suggested, they did help increase the size of the majority for the first Labor government in Victoria for 27 years. The campaign also won the genuine admiration of the new Minister for education, Robert Fordham, who developed a special relationship with the unions. Fordham was to become a key figure in the new government, not only in this portfolio but as Deputy Premier in a Cabinet where Premier Cain appeared to give him almost a free hand in education matters.

A key question which interested outsiders was whether the teacher unions' campaign of 1982 would be repeated in later elections. Did it signal the start of a long-term and special relationship between the ALP and the teacher unions? Would Victorian teacher unions, and especially the mass-based VTU, endorse the ALP in later years, or would it resume the non-interventionist role which was the norm of teacher unions elsewhere, and which had characterised the VTU before 1982? These questions were to be answered in the 1985 state elections.

In 1985 the Victorian teacher unions contributed approximately $70,000 to the ALP's state election campaign. Within the VTU, at least, there was doubt amongst the leadership that its Council would agree to any direct donation at all. Eventually it was decided that the VTU would contribute up to $30,000, but in small amounts directed to selected candidates who could establish a demonstrated commitment to public education. In the weeks leading up to the election the VTU Executive donated about $18,000 in sums of between $500 - $3,000 to individual candiates. The other two unions donated amounts totalling $50,000.

This obviously cautious, piecemeal approach contrasted markedly with the manner in which the VTU had supported the Labor party in the lead-up to the 1982 election. At that time it had made a $100,000 donation, and placed its staff and offices at the Party's disposal.

In the three years between elections in Victoria, then, the teacher unions' willingness to support the Labor Party, at least as measured in financial terms, dropped by two-thirds. What were the events, the circumstances, the changes which can account for this significant decline? Do they lie within the period between elections, or do they lie elsewhere?

Relations with the Labor Government 1982-85

The relationship between the unions and the Labor Party in government over this period was complex, intense and variable. In its 1982 pre-election platform, the ALP had given undertakings regarding a wide range of issues of importance to the teacher unions - issues both of an educational and an industrial nature. Speaking to the VTU Council prior to the 1985 election, the VTU's Deputy President presented an analysis of these undertakings and the extent to which they had been met in the three-year period. He concluded in the following terms:

> ... if you in any objective fashion get out the (ALP) policy and examine how the implementation has measured up to the promises, by any measure you will have to say that (it) is a pretty impressive record of delivery on promises ... In our case, we can see that this Minister and this Government have held their line very well.

In their subsequent voting the VTU Council endorsed this view. It may be useful, therefore, to examine more closely these promises, and their apparent fulfilment. (Below account from Nash and Spaull, 1986).

A major component of the Labor party's election platform had been an undertaking to consult effectively with educational interest groups. Concomitant with this was a promise that decisions would be made 'as close to schools as possible', and that what had previously been seen as a highly centralized decision-making apparatus would be decentralized, with decision making signficantly devolved to the local level.

Unquestionably, the promise to consult was delivered. The teacher unions (and the other major 'interest' group, the paretns' organisations) were rapidly drawn into an elaborate network of consultations and negotiations. The unions provided teacher representatives on bodies ranging from the State Board of Education to school councils; in between were a myriad of regional committees, selection panels and advisory bodies. Beyond the mechanics of formal representation, the unions became involved in consultation and negotiations in respect of almost all activities of the Education Department - budget proposals, career structures, logs of claims and the detail of their implementation were just a few. There was even a concerted attempt by the government to draw the teacher unions into decision making about the manner in which services would be cut as a result of an across-the-board 2 per cent reduction in the 1983 State Budget!

For the unions, being consulted by government and having the opportunity to participate in the Education Department's decision-making processes were important expectations when they had supported the Labor Government into power. In the event, however, the experience was not without its difficulties. In the first place, such extensive consultation required a great deal of time - on the part both of volunteer members and of paid union officials. Over the three-year period the VTU increased the number of its full-time officials by three, and conducted long-running arguments with the Education Department over time-release and subsidy for teachers to undertake consultative activities on the Union's behalf. At the end of 1984 the then Vice-President of the union declined to stand for re-election because the Council had refused to agree to the position becoming part-time office-based. Partly in order to finance expanded

staff and membership activity, the VTU raised its membership fees by 25 per cent in 1984.

Another, generally unacknowledged development was a concern that those who were engaged in consultation on behalf of the membership might become remote from that membership to an unacceptable degree. The question of confidentiality of information gained in consultative proceedings was one which exercised the union publicly on several occasions. The manner in which representatives were selected for particular activities was from time-to-time a contentious issue. The senior leadership of the Union were continuously and openly aware of the danger that decisions of the Union's governing bodies might outstrip the views of the general membership.

A second area of ALP promises in 1982 had revolved around the processes of industrial relations between teachers and their employer. Amongst its pre-election undertakings the ALP promised to introduce amending legislation to provide for a new industrial relations machinery in accordance with the principles of the Report of the joint Government-Teacher Working Party. In the three years following, much of this promise was redeemed. The Teaching Service Act (1983) introduced amendments to allow processes of direct negotiations, conciliation and arbitration. The Victorian Teaching Service Conciliation and Arbitration Commission (VTSCAC) was established, with two commissioners being nominated by the teacher unions. Each of the three teacher unions negotiated Conditions and Staffing Agreemtns for 1983, 1984 and 1985. A log of claims submitted jointly by the three teacher unions proved slow to finalise, but as each union's most important concerns were embodied in their separate logs, this slowness produced little concern amongst members.

In addition to attending to the mechanics of industrial relations, the Labor government immediately upon taking office resolved two bitter confrontations which had existed between the teacher unions and the Liberal government: limited-tenure employment of teachers was abolished, and stand-down regulations, which had been introduced in 1980, were repealed.

For primary teachers, it was in the area of staffing that the Labor government delivered one of its most valuable pre-election promises. In a period of declining enrolments in primary schools, the government honoured

a promise to maintain for the life of the parliament the number of primary teachers which had been employed prior to the ALP taking office. This meant the retention of over 1800 primary teaching positions which might otherwise have been lost, and resulted in some signficant betterments in general staffing ratios and in the provision of teachers for special purposes.

School buildings were a further area of major initiative by the Labor government. Over three annual budgets an additional $106 million was provided for building and maintenance works, and as well more than $50 million for school buildings was allocated from the State Development Fund. In terms of direct financial grants to schools, the Government made some significant increases. It also introduced a number of new policies which affected teachers' working conditions, the most notable being the introduction of seven-year family leave for all teachers, and permanent part-time employment.

During the Government's period in office, however, its relationship with the teacher unions had not been one of uniform harmony. In addition to the problems raised by the widespread introduction of conultative processes, there were other, more specific, thorns. Chief amongst these was the 2 per cent cut to all departments' running costs which was introduced by the 1983 State Budget. For the Education Department this cut was translated into, amongst other things, a drastic reduction in the availability of funds to pay for emergency teachers (employed on a casual basis to replace teachers on sick leave, excursions and inservice activities) and a 40 per cent reduction in the number of curriculum consultants available to work with teachers in schools. While some of these cuts were able to be 'negotiated away' in subsequent years, and others offset by ensuing government initiatives, the matter of restrictions on the school's capacity to employ emergency teachers remained a major source of discontent within the teacher unions. This problem was not alleviated by the Premier, in an address to the VTU Annual Conference in 1984, when he pinpointed teachers' 'sickies' as the cause of a 'blow-out' of the budget for emergency teaching. It is arguable that that occasion marked the point at which the mood within the VTU shifted tangibly away from the government; from then on its was political masochism, at least for any member who would seek elected office in the VTU, to espouse the ALP too staunchly.

There were also a number of matters of ALP policy which, in their implementation, provoked a response from teacher unionists which could be described as ambivalent. One such matter was the abolition of corporal punishment in schools. The process of effecting this particular change was one of the new Education Minister's first concerns after taking office. Typically, the Minister established a widely-representative working party to advise him to do the heed, and thus the actual decreee that corporal punishment was no longer to be employed did not appear for nearly a year. Particularly amongst primary teachers it created a good deal of anxiety and anger. This anger, howerver, was directed as much agasinst their union (which was seen to be compicit in the Minster's decision and against the union's own policy) as against the government.

Another policy towards which the unions displayed mixed feelings was the regionalisation of the Education Department. Although regional offices had been established the regional directors appointed over a decade earlier, their function had been largely to administer centrally-made decisions. The Labor government was now proposing some genuine devolution of control to regions which would have both a regional director and a representative Regional Board of Education. For the unions, weakening of central control meant the possible weakening of settlements which they looked forward to negotiating directly with their employer and with the government. In regard to Regional Boards, it also meant participating in consultative processes which would, as noted earlier, be a heavy drain upon their human resources.

In addition to regional boards and new-look school councils, the Labor government also established a State Board of Education. This body represented not so much a piece of restructuring of the Education Department, but rather an addition to the previous structure. Charged with the responsibility of providing advice to the Minister, separate from the advice he expected to receive from his Department, the Board was representative of teacher and parent organisations and of the administration, both within and outside the government education sector. In most respects the Board and its operation caused the teacher unions little concern, and in fact provided a useful additional avenue for adivce to, and infuence upon, the Minister. There was, however, a problem with its advice regarding the funding of private schools. Given its composition, the Board would never reach an agreement on this matter which would satisfy the government teacher unions, whose policy was opposed to

any public funding of private schools. The Minister's referral of this matter to the Board for its advice merely allowed him to sidestep the difficult political questions for a time, and in the end he referred it to a sub-group of Board members from which the government school organisation representatives were excluded. Predictably, this action generated considerable anger from government school organisations. For the most part, however, the State Board operated in a non-confronting, advisory fashion. As such, it was useful to the teacher unions, and no real source of contention within union memberships nor between the unions and the government.

Other aspects of the Labor government's financial management also raised concern within the unions. The 1983 Budget cut of 2 per cent across all departments has already been mentioned; the subsequent Budget in 1984 provided a minimum of growth in education expenditure. Direct grants paid to primary schools, which the VTU had hoped over the life of the parliament to see brought into line with those paid to post-primary schools, were raised but not to the extent hoped; the education allowance (a per capita amount for books and requisites paid alike for government and private school students) was increased only marginally. Further, the Government's policy decision to introduce 'program budgeting' to all departments was seen by the unions as in part an attempt to impose new centralised management forms.

There was one other ALP policy whose implementation caused anxiety and dissention within the teacher unions, but particularly within the VTU. This was the integration of children with disabilities into ordinary schools. Recommendations about the manner in which this policy would be implemented were made by a working party, on which the unions were represented. Union acceptance of the results of those recommendations was, however, as much acceptance of the inevitable as support for this new educational direction. For primary school teachers there were some important questions which could not be answered by theoretical pronouncements. What kinds of 'disabilities' would they be expected to cope with in their classroom? How far would parents go in insisting that their disabled child be placed in a local primary school? Importantly, what additional resources would be available to assist teachers whose classrooms took in 'disabled' children? At a time when teachers were experiencing new kinds of societal pressures upon their work, and witnessing the emergence of what seemed to be new behavioural problems in

their classroom, for many this requirement that they accept 'disabled' children seemed an unjustifiable burden.

The period between elections, then, was one in which the teacher unions had a far reaching and mixed relationship with the government. But does the balance sheet of that relationship add up to a sufficient explanation for the unions' relative hesitancy in backing the Labor Party for the 1985 state election?

To come back, then, to the question posed at the outset: why was teacher union support for the ALP in the 1985 State election so inferior to that provided three years earlier? Nash and Spaull answer it in three parts.

First, the unions' relationship with the Labor government had not been uniformly felicitous. There was clearly a debit side, as well as a credit side, to the ledger. While the 'bottom line' of the balance sheet might indicate a marginal profit, the size of this profit was not sufficient. Second, the mood of the membership was uncertain. There were doubts about the future of society, the purposes of schooling and the expectations of teachers. For many members those doubts were undoubtedly being experienced in a very personal way. Finally, the 1985 election did not hold out promise of the dawn of a bright new era. If it resulted in the election of a non-Labor government many small gains for schools and teachers, and some large ones, would probably be lost. If re-election of the Labor government was the result, teachers could look forward at best to a further period of gradual improvement, offset by the kinds of difficulties they had experienced in the previous three years.

In the fact of these circumstances, it is surprising that the governing bodies of the teacher unions agreed as readily and as generously as they did to supporting the ALP. In fact, the outcome may have been as much a measure of the strength of leadership in the teacher unions at the time as of any other factor. Speaking in the debate at VTU Council in February 1985 on the matter of whether the Union would donate funds to the ALP for the forthcoming election, the Deputy President concluded: 'The alternative is we don't support anyone and then we'll be disregarded and out in the political wilderness. That is unacceptable and I hope you are not tempted to take that line'. A week earlier a senior official of one of the other teacher unions was heard to express concern that the VTU

might not donate money to the Labor Party's election fund. 'If we don't donate money now', was the comment, 'we won't get anywhere in competitions with the other big departments when it comes to Budget time'.

Certainly such views connote concern on the part of the unions' leaders that they retain the kind of influence with the government to which they had become accustomed during the first three years of Labor rule. Undoubtedly this influence would be used, to the best of those leaders' abilities, for the good of members. But it is still reasonable to raise the question: to whom it is most important that the government connection be maintained - to union members or to their union leaders?

(ii) THE LOCAL LEVEL

The organizational structures of the Victorian teacher unions evolved in a manner which reflected both democratic and oligarchic tendencies, essentially because of the industrially strategic advantage gained from a strong central executive, with a freedom to act within broad policy guidelines at the shop floor level. The particular success of branch section in the earlier VSTA professional campaigns for control of entry and against inspection (1968-74) meant that the strategy soon became a principle of organizational development. Branches always had input into central policy facilitated by the procedures of the Annual General Meeting (AGM). The VSTA and TTUV recognised early that the branch was the unit upon which the strength of the unions could be built as they provided an opportunity for professional and autonomous decision making. The balance between centralized control, prescription and local autonomy has been tenuous and sometimes lost, with the tendency for large unions to bureaucratize in a manner similar to their parent organization, the employer. For example, Peter Vaughan, currently the Industrial Relations officer with the Education Ministry and past President of the VSTA, was concerned about the traditional, hierarchical organisation of branches which divorced decision making from members, overworked representatives, led to lack of dissemination of information and impeded the ability of branches to resolve issues quickly.

> the cornerstone of the VSTA is the branch and many Branches are set up along lines which actually work against effective membership and the development of a unified Branch. In many ways, branch organization is the key to increased membership. (Secondary Teacher, No 17, 1975, p. 5).

A VSTA Think Tank proposed in 1974 to disperse the concentration of branch work away from the few activists who were "rebuilding the hierarchies we were attempting to abaondon" (Mc Rae, 1986). The creation of several specialist branch positions with well defined functions encouraged the formation of sub-committees on the major areas of policy e.g. curriculum, tertiary entrance and assessment. The involvement by VSTA members in these committees nourished the need of young, well qualified teachers for professional educational outlets, and established a pattern of local school organization and teacher involvement engendered by the homogeneity of experience and training of teachers. (See Battersby, 1983). This strength was further extended into union teacher welfare and professional development activities. Local VSTA, VTU or TTUV branch representatives were the agents who could often facilitate swifter action than principals or head office, the latter renowned for its slowness in decision-making and apparent lack of concern for individuals. By 1975, the VSTA and TTUV had created organizations emphasizing local autonomy and action, with well developed links two-way links between branches and central office.

It was the unions who took the initiative in issue emergence and policy formation, as well as implementation, during the seventies on conditions, qualifications, teacher assessment, curriculum and student assessment. Whilst the unions set the agenda, the central administration and politicians were in a reactive, defensive stance. The post-primary unions were particularly active in cultivating alternative modes of school organisation and curriculum during the seventies, with the establishment of community schools, vertical groupings of students in mini-schools, the school based Schools Tertiary Entrance Certificate (STC) as an alternative to the external HSC examination (Victorian Teacher, Vol. 3, 1984 p. 7). The union, as such, was a vehicle for the intellectual energies of teachers. David McRae, one of the initiators of Sydney Road Community School, ex-Assistant Secretary of VSTA, former curriculum officer with VISE and now a member of the Education Ministry's Policy Advisory Unit, believed the VSTA acted as a vehicle for radical educational ideas: 'there was no apparent separation between the idea (of what education should be) and the vehicle for expression of it ... the union allowed a higher degree of personal commitment on humanistic and effective educational practice". (McRae, 1986).

Unionism was a major influence in the changing organizational structures and decision making habits in schools during the seventies, and aroused teacher expectations regarding the level of their involvement in policy making. The role of the "branch organization was to transform scattered, individual innovations into considered, tested, general school policy. "(Secondary Teacher, Vol. 1, 1975 p, 4). Branch procedures and evolution of policies on control of entry, inspection, teacher assessment, teachers rights, conditions, curriculum and direct negotiations were clearly established and disseminated through numerous communication channels, publications, workshops and policy committees on sexism, peace education, health and human relations.

Yet union influence in school organization was not uniformly pervasive throughout the state, and there were clear patterns of participation as well as levels of activity within branches which varied by geographical location (rural/urban; Western/Eastern suburbs). Certain pockets of schools were more prone to activity because of the coincedence of first year graduates, still bonded to the Education Department for three years, concentrated in less popular schools in the Western and Northern industrial suburbs where schools lacked the same facilities, few experienced staff, had a high incidence of ethnic students, generally from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Branch action within schools during the seventies in the form of strikes and stop works created divisiveness between unionist and non-unionists; strikers and non-strikers; administration and teachers; those who were signatories to the conditions case and those who weren't. In branches where the staff were more heterogenous and less politically cohesive, there existed factions of hardliners who followed union policy rigourously on all issues, and those who chose to strike only on certain issues. Many teachers were torn between the immediate professional commitment to students and the long term benefits to education gained through union action. The job of the branch representatives was to communicate the union position and action to the administration, and to encourage individuals to follow branch policy. In most schools there was an reluctant acceptance of the right of a union member 'not to strike', although they would generally offer financial or out of hours support. Many non-unionists also agreed with the principle of the issue, and refused to take on "scab" functions to maintain the everyday functioning of a school and thus mitigate against strike action. This was partially the consequence of the widespread dissemination of union literature around schools, available to all in

staffrooms, and which meant most staff membes were aware, if not supportive, of union policies.

One achievement of the professional action program of the early seventies on inspection and teacher assessment by the VSTA was the institution of teacher assessment panels (STEPs) and Special Duties Allowance committees (SDA) which allowed elected teacher representatives to establish administrative priorities and duties, and determine staffing allocations. The institution of such committees were fraught with difficulties as unionists perceived the informal power networks as acting against the formal strucutre and procedures being established through union activity. Phil Noyce, VSTA Executive, questioned in 1976 whether "in fighting for local decision making, the VSTA is promoting its own demise" in that departmental manoeuvres underlying such democratic processes were seen to operate to the detriment of unionsts. (Secondary Teacher, No. 5, 1976, p. 5). Such observations would be held out by organizational literature on motives behind employers giving in to demands of workplace democracy. (Mason, 1982).

Control of the workplace and industrial democracy in Victorian teacher unionism in the mid-seventies was well exemplified in VSTA policy on staff executives. Attempts to make inroads on the authoritairan, paternalistic control of the principals, as representatives of the Director General and middle managers of the education bureaucracy, in the distribution of resources and allocation of duties and staff in schools. Traditionally, the allegiance of the principals lay with the departmental bureaucracy, an attitude bred by promotion procedures dependent on years of service and seniority rather than the professional skill or administrative expertise. Interestingly, the school based administrators were not included in the departmental policy discussions, but were merely seen to be the implementators of central decisions at the workface. With the increased willingness of the Department to negotiate directly with teacher unions by the mid-seventies, principals saw the need to protect their own positions and formed their own associations such as the Victorian High Schools Principals Association. In the Technical schools, there was not the same divisions, with a more collegial rather than hierarchical relationship, based on the presence of trade experienced staff (p. 50 Meier & Welsh). Such divisiveness was less common in primary schools due to the greater acceptance by primary teachers of the paternalistic role of the principal, partially due to training, but also

occupational socialization in a more hierarchical and rigid work situation (Nias, 1985, pp. 105-119). The conflict model of principal/staff relationships which characterised the seventies in the VSTA was exacerbated by the generation gap resulting from the influx of young, highly qualified staff and led to a reassessment of this relationship over executive administrative control (Meier & Walsh, 1982, p. 187).

Those isolated secondary schools which implemented the staff executive policy, generally with a concentration of radical staff or principals with VSTA membership, (Reid 1981, pp. 24-5; See also Secondary Teacher, no. 18, 1976, pp. 6-10) often found the process time consuming and yet fulfilling. A teacher participating in such as experiment in 1978 described the experience:

> One of the most immediate consequences is, of course, a plethora of meetings. We now hold a regular Monday staff meeting after school in order to establish basic school policies. A rotating chairperson system is employed, the chair is never taken by the Principal who is as free as any other to attend or not. Subcommittee have proliferated, rapidly creating a system not unlike the VSTAs own. (Secondary Teacher, no. 10, 1978, p. 11).

The elected staff executive, allowing for a limited principal veto on the provision that justification was given, administered all aspects of the schools policy. Staff control of school policy was built into the VSTA policy:

> the staff shall determine how school policy will be decided including the procedures for gauging staff views on school policy, and the means by which, and the extent to which views of the parents, students and the community might contribute to the school policy decision making (Secondary Teacher no. 1, 1978, p. 16).

Despite its limited application, one of the consequences of the Staff Executive policy and the concept of school based decision making, was a rethinking of the nature of the principalship, and the method of appointments of Principals and, by implication, the nature of community involvement in school policy and administration. Technical schools had since 1974, appointed ad hoc committees involving parents and teachers for principal selection, with the recommendation finally submitted to the Board of Classifiers, and subject to normal appeal procedures. In practice, the Classifiers did not always accept the decisions. The TTAV went as far as advocating local selection of staff, based on the belief

that it facilitated a development of a coherent educational policy and was more sensitive to student needs (TTAV Associate News, 9 Feb. 1979, p. 10). The VSTA also supported the principle of local selection of principal, as it favoured the notion of "making the principal fit the staff" and not vice versa, but felt some ambivalence regarding the extent and nature of community influence in school policy and how it impinged on professional expertise. The VTU responses were equally cautious, deciding that schools councils should not be the sole determinants of principal appointments, but merely the statutory body to form a 'selection panel' which was equally representative of parents, teachers and administration. One consequence was to open up, at least in the short term, the Principal class to many younger applicants from the Senior Teacher class.

The question of 'what is community' has been frequently addressed by each of the organizations due to the constant demands that if local autonomy was taken to its logical conclusion, individual school policy should be in accordance with community needs. With the reconstitution of School Councils in 1976 and again in 1981, union policy has been for equal representation of parents, teachers and students. This antagonised many parent organizations, used to dominated advisory councils. Most councils, when formally constituted, had a minority of teachers due to community concerns, generally more conservative, that such councils would be run by 'radical teachers'. Teachers manifest similar distrust with the extension of School Council powers over all school policy, but in the practical decision making of the new Councils were able to locate allies amongst parents and students. In many Councils, Principals still maintained their privileged positions by virtue of their control of information, liaison role between staff and council, and control of the agenda, an advantage exerbated by the uncertainty of many parents. Initially, with the School Councils in an advisory capacity, there was little threatening the professional expertise of teachers, since "the procedure of making educational policy was to be decided by the whole teaching body" (Secondary Teacher, no. 1, 1975). Staff executive policy had also been grounded on the idea of expertise rather than representativeness of the school community. But with the Labor party devolution policy in action in 1983, the State Board report on Principals argued:

> The Ministerial Paper on schools councils established the Governments intention that schools be key units in the education system. School councils, working with state guidelines and industrial agreements, will be responsible for the formulation of overall school policy which will include policies on curriculum and school administration ... the schools policy and resulting education program will be developed through collaboration and negotiation between those groups most directly concerned with schools and will reflect local values, needs and interests (Victorian State Board, 1983, p. 3).

This was to reduce the mismatch between staff-determined curriculum offerings and the principal as the primary agency of implementation, curriculum advocate and administrator (See Chapman, 1985). Recent advertisements for a High School principal illustrate how a School Council has become the official policy maker.

> The school council has a strong commitment to participatory decision making processes at all levels involving staff, parents and students. The School Council ... contains close and harmonious working relations with the operations of the school via stading committees for curriculum, finance, building and grounds, canteen and communications (Education Gazette, 5 July, 1984, p. 445).

The dissolution of the structural dichotomy between policy and administration has laid open the decision making processes to all interest groups, such that there a new element of corporatism has entered policy making at local level in the eighties. (Harrison, 1980).

The role of the branch in the organizational structure has faced two challenges. First, the earlier reliance on branch action to initiate action was confronted with a concerted attack by the Liberals (1979-82) and their ability to victimise individual schools. For example, the proceedings against 17 VSTA members at Preston East Girls High for refusing to use competitive assessment. Ministerial initiatives, promoted by the Education Act (1981), to return power to the centre was evident in a sequence of decisions made without union consultation on a core curriculum model, the imposition of compulsory Physical Education, establishment of Human and Health Relations Committees, and new increased accountability (See Ryan, 1982). Second, the devolution of responsibility to schools through the Labor Governments push for collaborative decision making in schools has meant that branch revitalization and membership

education have become a VTU, TTUV and VSTA priority in the eighties with in-servicing of branch representatives at the Trade Union Training Authority, workshops to the general membership on negotiations at local level, decision making for school and council representatives (Victorian Teacher, No. 1984, p. 3; TTAV News, Vol. 13, No. 8, p. 79). Apart from the general uncertainties created by the extent of the administrative and educational changes initiated by the Ministry, union branch leadership role has significantly altered. It is far less common for office bearers the school branch level to be experienced people with official status in school and increasingly branch membership comprises of inexperienced and younger teachers.

The same push for democratization of the workplace from the Labor party policy committee combined with the framework of committee systems and school based decision existing in most schools as a result of teacher union activities increased and the expectation of teachers, and unionists in particular, to be involved in the decision making in schools. Collectively, these factors set the stage for a unique set of negotiations on school management between the Education Department and the teachers unions.

The democra tization of decision making in educational administration is not exeptional. What is unique as the willingness of the Labor Minister to establish direct negotiations with the unions which led to both separate and Joint Union Industrial Agreements between the Minister and the VSTA (1983); the TTUV and VTU (1984). These agreements determined the nature of staffing, conditions, and school organization (See Agreement Implementation, VSTA News, 1985). The agreements were welcomed by teacher unionists, as a single Log of Claims sought to replace the need for action on one-off issues with a comprehensive industrial approach. The democratic process underlying the formation of policy at the AGM was retained.

The Agreement was significant in that it institutionalised the committee structures which had already evolved in the seventies, it consolidated the union branch as the negotiating body for teachers in schools and established the principle of union representation on major committees. An Agreement Implementation Committee of the Industrial Office of the Education Department resolved any breaches or grievances brought in to resolve the dispute.

The Agreement was an attempt to standardize conditions across the state. In doing so, it meant some schools in the northern and western suburbs, prepared to be more militant due to poor conditions had made considerable gains which were lost by the uniformity of the Agreement. Members of such radical unions branches were bitter at the demise of the 1980-1982 policy of needs-based staffing which had given greater flexibility in staffing appropriate to individual schools. Other schools, facing a declining enrolment, found the staffing formula led to difficult decisions regarding the allocation and use of a reduced number of staff, often leading to choices between careers teachers, remedial work or pupil welfare co-ordinators. On the whole, there was optimism well into the first year the agreement operated as union branches were seen as "legitimate organizations" in school administration and policy making and were consulted. Many teachers reported that there was less day to day conflict between branch and school administration, and that staffs were not divided into opposing factions. These improved relations allowed teachers to look to educational issues of curriculum, transition education and retention. Numerous schools reported increased branch participation and numbers with withdrawal of union subscriptions restored and industrial peace, with over 80% of all teachers belonging to a union. Others foresaw a new apathy amongst teachers, a willingness to give over trust to new Labor Government, whilst the cynics perceived the unions as being "Hamstrung and degutted by the agreements", as "the cream of our industrial leaders have been enticed into Ministerial appointments" (Victorian Teacher, no. 2, 1983, pp. 6-10). This response to the Agreement has hardened in the last two years, as central office is seen to be compromised in its close relationship with Fordham, the Minister. One teacher was critical of the mythology and reification of an Agreement that meant disadvantaged schools and committed teachers were forced to accept a lowest common denominator, calling for more flexibility to pursue "over-agreement" clauses similar to the needs - based principal (Victorian Teacher, no. 3, 1985, p. 17-20). Peter Watkins reflected that:

> School democracy might also be looked at in a sceptical fashion, as a covert method of controlling formerly militant unions. From this viewpoint it could be argued that increased participation may be a means to reduce any union discontent and to minimize its effectiveness. By being actively integrated in to the decision making process, teachers are less likely to act against any decision for which they are partially responsible. This ensures a high degree of stability in what has been a highly volatile industrial arena. The

> resultant stable and predictable educational situation becomes a major achievement for politicans extolling a mandate for good industrial relations. (Watkins, 1985, p. 111-2).

The industrial agreement in this instance has minimised the ability of branches to carry out their previously independent action to meet the specific needs of schools, whilst demanding a commitment to the decisions made by the Administrative Committees. The coincedence of the new management of schools with the Agreement and a period of economic contraction, declining enrollment, and reduced expenditure, have involved and committed unions members to decisions which are often detrimental to individual unionists and the branch itself, least of all to the students and school community. One senior officer of the central administration believed that "we have ended up locking school and the regions into tight details of operation as a result of industrial agreements. They are understandable but they run against the general policy of devolution ..." (Restructuring, 1985, p. 33). The centralistic tendencies characteristic of industrial negotiations in order to establish uniform sets of conditions tends to inflexibility for individual cases.

The multiplicity of decision making structures and procedures which have developed over the past two years has never been closely monitored or recorded. Some schools run on democratic procedures in a complex committee systems, and others along more traditional lines, allowing greater discretionary powers to rest with the principal. School based decision making is seen to be 'an integral plank of the Government Ministerial Papers and the Industrial Agreements". (Teachers Journal, No. 10, 1984, p. 112). A VTU survey reports:

> The process of change to decentralized decisions according to some teachers had outstripped teacher abilities to participate in the process. On the other hand, many teachers have eagerly adopted the philosophy of school based decision making. They are keenly aware of the importance of involving the whole community. Teachers report improved staff morale and job satisfaction. Others say they value working closely with their collegues on local innovations (Teachers Journal, 10 July, 1984, p. 13).

Lack of support facilities and resources, as well as time allowances for staff involved in such time consuming processes as program budgeting endanger the success of such devolution. Participation has become an argument in the union campaigns opposing the reduction of teaching staff

in a time of declining enrollments. (Victorian Teacher, Victorian Teacher, No. 5, 1985, p. 5). Despite worsening conditions, union members dominate the administrative, curriculum, SDA School Council Committees, having the past experience and also a commitment to certain educational policies. This does not necessarily imply agreement on the method of implementation and application but rather than teachers concerned with the theory and practice of teaching and learning perceive their involvement in the union as essential aspect of their professional commitment and responsibility, (See Chapman, 1986).

The principle of local autonomy in decision making is well exemplified in the issue of curriculum, which was the catalyst for some of the greatest successes and defeats of VSTA policies during the seventies. With the abolition of external examinations except the Year 12 Higher School Certificate by 1970, the VSTA stance was to openly confront the selectivity of the HSC exam, and demanded "staff control of curriculum from K to 12", open tertiary entrance and non-competitive assessment. That is, decisions in schools and classrooms practice should be made by "highly qualified teaching personnel who are familiar with the schools situation and who have the responsibility of putting the decision into effect" (Secondary Teacher, no. 1, 1975, p. 9).

Control of curriculum has become an industrial issue by the 1980's because it cannot be separated from volatile questions of credentialling, assessment, school organization and structure. Curriculum was an issue which also created a tension between the centralistic tendencies of a union and the autonomy of school based professionals as resolutions on curriculum at AGM meetings of the VSTA in the early seventies tested adherence to central policy. There was a fear voiced that we have "replaced the external authority of the VUSEB with another external authority - the VSTA" (Secondary Teacher, no. 7, 1976, pp. 9-12). By 1978, it was resolved by allowing central statements of broad principles and allow decentralisation and democracy in curriculum policy. "The educational program and the organizational pattern of a school is the concern of the local community, i.e the parents, students and teachers associated with the school." (Secondary Teacher, no, 1, 1978, p. 16). Most schools had formed with permanent or ad hoc curriculum committees. Now, within the expanding social policy of the union, curriculum representatives were to "develop 'community' in your school community" (Secondary Teacher, no. 9, 1, 1978, p. 17)

The TTUV had long seen curriculum as industrial issue, closely bound up with needs based staffing. Staff ceilings and core curriculum, suggested in 1980, were perceived as definite inroads by the Liberal government to remove the right of the school and community to determine curriculum. The TTUV was particularly sensitive because of the massive restructuring commencing in 1980 with the abolition of the separate administrative divisions between primary, technical and high schools. Technical school teachers felt particularly threatened and claimed a unique curriculum of 'learning by doing' was encouraged in technical schools, (TTUV News, July 23, 1980, p. 16) and have more recently attempted to maintain staffing through 'stacking' enrolment figures (Age, 13 February, 1986). Finally, the Blackburn report recommendations regarding the nature of post compulsory education which included restructuring of Years 11 and 12 into senior colleges, has caused union concern since such suggestions of a division between a junior and senior school would fragment the unions support base, create a 'lesser' junior system in terms of status, resources and staffing, and go against the union preference for a K-12 comprehensive curriculum (Victorian Teacher, no. 3, 1985, p. 5ff). Many previous progressive educational achievements such as the STC alternative to HSC traditional curriculum are seen to be under threat despite their increasing popularity with participation of over 10% of Year 12 students. (Victorian Teacher, no 4, 1985, p. 6ff).

What then are the implications for the unions' influence in localised decision making and policy in the face of current structural and educational changes? Possible issues are:

(1) the concept of "representativess" which arises in corporate democratic procedures. This can be illustrated with the example of the makeup of the Regional boards and the nature of union influence at this level. Each of the three unions central councils appoint representatives to the Regional Boards, together with parent organizations, principals, elected community and departmental representatives. Each of these interest groups have set constituents, an historical relationship between each other and the department, and operate as representatives of the interest group rather than as individual representatives of the geographical abstract of the region e.g. a corporate rather than democratic model. Parents, elected from the 'community' of parents, lack a well defined constituency, agenda, support system or information network or a specific body to whom, they are accountable. In such circumstances, teacher unions (and parent

organizations) have both the numbers as well as the support systems at Regional level. Even in this climate of consultation and consensus exclusion of certain interest groups occurs depending on the power balance. One central administrator said that 'there was a feeling in the system that the unions are running the show' (Restructuring 1985, p. 35). (2) Since the union is the only legitimate negotiating body for the teachers, it is the union membership which is bearing the brunt of the participatory process. One effect is that there is burn-out due to overload. Consequently, many teachers are beginning to withdraw from the participatory decision making process to return to classroom duties. A second effect at the organizational level is that the maintenance of a coherent union policy on the diverse issues teacher representatives are confronted with is beyond the capabilities of the limited resources of the separate teacher unions. McRae indicates that unless the unions amalgamate to pool resources and reduce the numbers of 'representatives' required, that the effectiveness of union activity will be dissipated. (McRae, 1986).

(3) Women have not dominated teacher unions (post primary) at the regional or executive level although they make up 67% of all teachers in Victoria. (Fareburst, 1982). The failure of the union campaign to achieve equal representation of males and females on Regional Boards and many union councils and executives reflects more than disinterest of their female members. Studies of the reducing number of women in senior positions in schools, despite the call for affirmative action promotion policies, indicate that women do not feel as competent or capable in administrative and committee executive roles due to lack of experience. Research by Sampson (1985), Faneburst (1984) and Sarros (1984) concur that women teachers lack the same networking and support of mentors in the educational hierarchy to foster administrative experience in their early years of teaching. Such evidence appears equally valid for women in unions (Chapman, 1986). Unless more positive attempts are made to encourage women to move up the ranks, unions will lose a large sector of potential support.

(4) The unique relationship between the government and the unions to the exclusion of others is creating some distrust amongst other interest groups and even amongst education officials at regional and local levels. For example, the current problems of declining enrolments, rationalization procedures and restructuring, critical decisions regarding closure of

small schools, the redistribution of resources and staff by amalgamation and clustering of groups of schools, have largely been left to individual or groups of schools to negotiate, with the assistance of Regional Boards. Some rationalization has commenced within the climate of uncertainty awaiting the Blackburn Reports implementation. Lack of consultation and confusion in regions has led first to a Working Party of the TFV and Education Department officials, and second, the decision to form a Task Force to establish procedures, which would (i) maximise student access to curriculum (ii) protect the professional and industrial rights of teachers (Victorian Teacher, no. 4, 1985, p. 3). Parent organizations and Regional Boards have been critical of the Ministry regarding the lack of pluralistic consultation in favour of direct negotiations with the unions on establishing the procedures for rationalization. (AGE, 5 Feb; Maslen, 1986).

There is also a tendency to revert to the centralism in policy making by the unions which constrains unionists in local school based decision making situations. The Regional Boards powerlessness regarding staffing and resource allocation is exacerbated. One Senior Education Officer spoke of meetings at which:

> the Regional Directors Educational Resource Committee gets to a certain point and then we are told "We can't get any further in the discussion on that because the unions are talking with the Minister or the Director of Personnel and Industrial Relations or the Director of Curriculum - there is negotiation going on there and you will not be told about it. (Angus: 1984, p. 31).

Principals, regional directors and parent organizations perceive that the Minister was making decisions after consultation with teacher unions, and "quite reluctantly, to save face, with the principal's unions". (Restructuring p. 49). Regional officers are caught between the upward policy making of the local school and the downard neo-centralist and digarchic tendencies of the parent, teacher organizations and central bureaucrats.

Such accessibility to the Minister at the centre does not guarantee the unions' position in future consultative processes on policy at any level. Increasingly, the federal and state governments (the latter with a new Minister not so endeared with consultation), have chosen to appoint individuals rather than representatives of interest groups on important policy making and evalaution committes such as the Commonwealth Quality of

Education Review Committee (1985), because of the likelihood of a speedier and more favourable report in line with government concerns for efficiency. The neo-centralism displayed by government officials and Labor politicians in the name of efficiency, economy and rationalization indicates that the Labor governments have found 'representativeness' and consultation are both time-consuming and often openly divergent with government priorities and survival. The appointment of an advisory policy group in the new State Education Ministry is perhaps a signal of reform even demise, of the currently representative State Board. Gerry Tickell, technical teachers representative on the State Board was critical, for example, of the political interference in favour of principals and the Education Department regarding the procedures recommended by a State Board Report on appointment of principals. The rhetoric of participation and collaboration so frequently exercised by both unions and the bureaucracy sounds hollow in such circumstances.

(5) Collaboration between teachers (generally unionists) and parents on the numerous school based and regional committee structures in a time of relative industrial peace has created an ethos of consensus and mutual understanding. But again, this creates a dilemma for professionals and unionists, pursuing professional autonomy and quality education. On the one hand, parent organizations and local parent groups have supported union action on such issues as needs-based staffing, e.g. the Five Organizations (TTUV News, Vol. 13, no, 10, 1979). But on the other hand, this search for consensus can favour retention of the status quo rather than promote change. Declining enrolments, dezoning practices, the rhetoric of choice and diversity, economic retrenchment and increased community influence on school staff and policy, have ultimately increased teachers vulnerability and therefore accountability, due to competition for clients.

Some practical questions need to be asked about school based management. Hewitson (1985, pp 101-2) argues that it has not proved effective in resolving issues regarding the aims, objectives and content of schooling. Witness the continuing battle in Britain between the traditionalists and the progressives. Nor has local community participation in North America for a century resulted in diminishing the "accountability demand" gap now evident in Victoria. If the current educational political policy makers come to similar conclusion, as it appears they may have, the energy and personnel invested in the school

based decision making exercise by the unions is in jeopardy and needs to be reconsidered. Yet the inseparable principles of unionism and professionalism permeate the processes and structures of local decision making in Victorian education, with teachers expecting a say at all stages of the policy process-problem definition, policy formulation, implementation, evaluation and even demise of educational programs. In a contracting system, different demands will arise, and the focal point of the local organization, the union branch, will again need to adapt. Bill Hannan, former editor of the Secondary Teacher, and now Ministerial advisor, suggests a new conceptualization of the role of the branch:

> Up until 1982-3 the branch's strength was largely measured by their capacity to impose union conditions and respond to provocation ... In the future a strong branch will be the one which pervades the school structures and which brings the kind of educational democracy expressed in teacher union policy to bear on the administration and the curriculum of the school (Hannan, 1982, p. 3).

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